Members of Underground Press Bar Newsmen at National Meeting

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MADISON, Wis., Dec. 1 — Members of the underground press gathered at the University of Wisconsin here this weekend for their first national conference and promptly barred regular newsmen from the proceedings.

Present were about 250 representatives of high school underground papers, press services and syndicates and radio and film-making groups as well as the staffs of many weekly and bimonthly tabloids.

The policy of barring newsmen derived from the group's general dislike of the mass media rather than for security reasons.

In fact, a 2½-hour session of the conference was devoted to a discussion of the underground media's relationship to the mass media.

The basic position of the radicals, as stated by Allen Young, of Liberation News Service, was that the mass media "provide a distorted value formation and reinforce those values without necessarily outright lying."

Setting up two problems—"How we can attack and undermine the mass media?" and "How we can relate to the mass media?" the underground journalists opened a debate that in the end left the two problems still unresolved.

Among the observations:

"The media (the press, advertising and films) in this country," said one New York undergrounder, "is everywhere and an attack on the media is an attack on the country."

"We want to create an alternate media entirely," said another, "and cut them off entirely from us."

"The media can be an instrument of social control or liberation. It can fertilize and organize consciousness."

"The reasons for us to exist are our own reasons: to organize and propagandize."

"The best leftist journalists in the world got their training on Life and Fortune . . . the Communist Manifesto was mass media."

"The left's problem is not to worry about being co-opted by mass media and its relation to the mass media. The problem is organizing a mass base and how that is to be done."

"The problem," said a middle-aged Canadian representing The Canada Goose, "is how we can organize the radical media into a viable national press."

"It's not media we're trying to be," said another.

From the conference it was clear that the hottest new areas of the underground media were the high school papers and the film makers. About five high school organs, including the one at the famous Bronx High School of Science in New York City were represented.

The film makers, who are going by the name Newsreal throughout the country, acknowledged themselves as the propaganda arm of the most militant factions of the radical movement. Based in New York, San Francisco, Chicago and elsewhere, their crews roam about the country filming activities related to the movement.